

## **CHAPTER 6: EVIDENCE OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTRUCTION FOR THE CLASS OF 2004**

### **Introduction**

The primary evidence used to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction in the CAHSEE standards was whether most students were able to pass the exam. Passing rates were computed by comparing the number of students who have passed each portion of the exam in each of the administrations from March 2001 through January 2003 with the number of 10<sup>th</sup> graders enrolled in fall of 2001, the year that the Class of 2004 entered that grade. Passing rates were computed for all students and for disadvantaged or “at-risk” students, including economically disadvantaged, English learners (EL), and special education (SE) students<sup>3</sup>. Overall and subgroup passing rates were also computed separately for 1,843 high schools, using counts of 10<sup>th</sup> graders from the 2002 STAR administration as the base for each school and demographic subgroup. Again, results from the survey of instruction and the interviews are presented to extend the information on passing rates.

### **Passing Rates**

Notwithstanding the extensive impact that the CAHSEE requirement has had on both initial and remedial instruction, passing rates remained low for many schools. Table 6.1 shows overall passing rates for each portion of the CAHSEE through January 2003, the most recent data available at the time the effectiveness of instruction was evaluated. Previously, CDE had published cumulative passing rates through July of 2002. Table 6.1 also shows changes in the passing rates resulting from the four administrations provided in July, September, and November of 2002, and January of 2003.

For English-language arts (ELA), the overall passing rate was above 80 percent. If the cumulative rate continued to increase at about 10 percent per year, it would have reached roughly 95 percent by June 2004. Note, however, that the remaining students would have had greater difficulty in reaching the passing standard and also that continued progress assumed that significant resources would continue to be available to help students to reach this standard. In addition, not all of the students who were in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in 2002 would still have been in school and attempting to pass the CAHSEE by the end of their senior year. While the overall passing rate for ELA was relatively high, English learners and students with disabilities continued to have problems. Unless the rate of improvement had increased dramatically, at least a quarter of the EL students and over a third of SE students would not have reached passing levels by June 2004.

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<sup>3</sup> Note that fall enrollment counts are not available for economically disadvantaged students, defined in terms of eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch. Disaggregated counts by school and grade are not available for this variable. For this category, counts of Spring 2002 STAR examinees flagged as eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) were used. This approach undercounts NSLP students to a small extent because students excluded from testing are not in the counts. Thus passing rates for this category apply to students who are eligible for testing.

For mathematics, evidence for the effectiveness of current initial and remedial instruction was less positive. Just over 60 percent of the Class of 2004 had passed the mathematics portion of the CAHSEE. Unless the rate of improvement increased dramatically, about 20 percent of all students would have failed to pass the mathematics requirement, with the result that they would have been denied a diploma. Here too, the problem was much worse for EL and SE students. At the then current rate of improvement, about half of the EL students and 75 percent of the SE students would have failed to meet the mathematics requirement.

Table 6.1 Approximate Passing Rates for the Class of 2004 (Through Jan. 2003)

Group	2001-2002 10 <sup>th</sup> Graders*	Number Passing CAHSEE Through Jan. 2003		Ratio** (# Passing / Enrollment)		Change from July 2002	
		ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
All Students	459,588	373,284	287,129	81%	62%	+8%	+9%
Economically Disadvantaged	125,139	99,009	67,380	79%	54%	+10%	+11%
English Learners (EL)	77,446	42,013	28,969	54%	37%	+11%	+10%
Special Education (SE)	47,169	18,804	10,210	40%	22%	+9%	+6%

\* Based on fall 2001 enrollment data, except counts of economically disadvantaged students are based on spring 2002 STAR data. (Counts of economically disadvantaged students by grade were not otherwise available.)

\*\* The ratio is not exactly the percent of students who have passed. Some of the students who have passed have transferred out of the state or dropped out and were not included in the counts of 2001-2002 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Further, some EL or SE students passing the CAHSEE in 9<sup>th</sup> grade may have been classified differently in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and not counted in the base for these groups

As clearly indicated in our survey and interviews and from other sources, instruction varies considerably from district to district and from school to school. The next step in our analysis of instruction for the Class of 2004 was to compute passing rates for each school. The question addressed in these analyses is “How many school systems (high schools plus middle-grade feeder schools) have had instruction that is effective in helping students to master the CAHSEE standards?”

Table 6.2 shows the number of schools with high, moderate, low, and very low passing rates for each portion of the CAHSEE. Results are also shown separately for groups of at-risk students and for schools with varying proportions of each type of student. For these analyses, passing rates less than 50 percent were considered very low, passing rates from 50 percent to 75 percent were considered low, passing rates from 75 percent to 90 percent were considered moderate, and passing rates above 90 percent were considered high. In subsequent analyses, we used a 75 percent passing rate as the dividing line between schools with moderate or high passing rates (more than 75% passing) where evidence for the effectiveness of instruction was generally positive and schools with low or very low passing rates (fewer than 75% passing) where the evidence of effectiveness was less positive. Note that the results shown in Table 6.2 were based on 1,843 high schools (essentially all) and not limited to the sample responding to the survey or participating in the interviews.

Table 6.2 Percent of Schools with High, Moderate, Low, and Very Low Passing Rates

Table 6.2 Percent of Schools with High, Moderate, Low, and Very Low Passing Rates									
Size (# of 2002 10 <sup>th</sup> Graders)	Number of Schools	Percent in School Passing ELA*				Percent in School Passing Math*			
		Very Low < 50%	Low 50– 74%	Mod. 75– 94%	High > 95%	Very Low < 50%	Low 50– 74%	Mod. 75– 94%	High > 95%
All Students									
1–99	930	40%	25%	16%	19%	75%	13%	6%	6%
100–499	533	15%	12%	34%	39%	28%	30%	32%	10%
500+	380	5%	16%	49%	30%	19%	43%	33%	6%
All	1,843	26%	19%	28%	27%	50%	24%	19%	7%
English Learners									
1–9	1,071	78%	7%	2%	13%	86%	5%	1%	8%
10–49	386	45%	23%	16%	17%	60%	22%	10%	9%
50+	386	34%	41%	21%	4%	70%	22%	5%	3%
All	1,843	62%	17%	9%	12%	77%	12%	4%	7%
Special Education Students									
1–9	1,056	70%	7%	2%	22%	84%	5%	1%	10%
10–49	629	39%	22%	16%	24%	70%	17%	6%	7%
50+	158	59%	25%	9%	6%	90%	8%	1%	1%
All	1,843	58%	13%	7%	21%	79%	10%	3%	8%

\* Note: Percents in each row group may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Overall, half of California's high schools had passing rates lower than 50 percent for the mathematics portion of the CAHSEE. Passing rates were above 75 percent in only about a quarter of all high schools. Passing rates were lower for smaller schools, which were likely to have fewer resources. Seventy-five percent of the schools with fewer than 100 students had very low passing rates for the CAHSEE mathematics test and only 12 percent had moderate or high passing rates.

Very few schools had high passing rates for English learners and special education students. For mathematics, 77 percent of the schools had very low passing rates for EL and 79 percent had very low passing rates for SE students. Passing rates were even lower for schools that had higher numbers (50 or more) students in each of these categories. Only 8 percent of schools with 50 or more EL students had moderate or high passing rates compared to 19 percent of schools with 10 to 49 EL students. Similarly, only 2 percent of the schools with 50 or more SE students had moderate to high passing rates for these students, compared to 13 percent of the schools with 10 to 49 SE students.

Given low initial passing rates for the CAHSEE, a key question is the effectiveness of high school courses designed to help students who still need to master content standards that were or should have been covered at earlier grades. Principals were asked whether they offered summer courses designed to help students who were having difficulty in passing the CAHSEE. Roughly 8 percent of them said that they did. However, the majority reported that fewer than 25 percent of the students who had not passed the CAHSEE took these courses and that fewer than 25 percent of the students who did take the course were able to pass the CAHSEE on their next attempt. During our site visits, we were able to obtain class lists from

a number of these courses. Indeed, roughly 20 percent of the students we were able to match to records from CAHSEE administrations subsequently passed.

### Relationship of Passing Rates to Alignment

Passing rates were significantly higher for schools reporting early alignment to the California Academic Content Standards covered by the CAHSEE. Table 6.3 shows the relationship between coverage of the CAHSEE Academic Content Standards reported by the high school principals in our survey and passing rates for the Class of 2004 computed from the test data.

Table 6.3 Percent of Schools (N=279) with High Passing Rates (> 75%) by Time of Implementation of Standards-Based Instruction (SBI)

First Year in Which SBI Covered at Least 75% of Content Standards	ELA		Mathematics	
	Schools Reaching 75% Coverage	% with > 75% Passing	Schools Reaching 75% Coverage	% with > 75% Passing
Before 1999	10%	100%	14%	100%
1999–2000	69%	94%	72%	64%
2000–2001	42%	88%	40%	45%
2001–2002	66%	79%	62%	39%
2002–2003	42%	74%	36%	28%
Not Yet	33%	61%	36%	19%

The survey question asked principals to estimate coverage of the content standards in each academic year beginning with “Before 1999” through the current 2002–2003 school year. In virtually all cases, coverage increased each year. We sorted schools by the first year for which coverage was estimated to exceed 75 percent of the standards and looked at the passing rates for each category. As shown in Table 6.3, passing-rate results are quite closely related to the coverage data. All schools reporting high coverage before 1999 had high passing rates. For ELA, the proportion of schools with high passing rates ranged from 100 percent for schools with the earliest coverage down to 61 percent for schools that did not report at least 75 percent coverage at any time. For mathematics, the proportion of schools with moderate or high passing rates ranged from 100 percent for the “early adopters” down to only 19 percent for schools that were not yet reporting 75 percent coverage of the standards.

### Factors that Limit the Effectiveness of Current Instruction

#### Student Preparation

Teachers responding to the surveys were asked about a number of factors that limited the effectiveness of their courses. In both the survey results and the interviews, a critical limitation was the number of students who did not have key skills needed to succeed in the course they were taking. Table 6.4 summarizes teachers’ responses to the question asking what proportion of their students had the necessary prerequisite skills. For the majority of

courses targeting special education students and English learners, the teachers reported that “Most students do not yet have prerequisite skills.” Thus, schools may well be offering effective instruction in the targeted content standards, but teachers reported that many special education students and English learners are not yet ready to benefit from these courses.

Table 6.4 Teachers’ Evaluation of How Well Students are Prepared for Their Course

Target Population For the Course	Percent of Teachers Indicating:		
	Few Students Are Well-Prepared	Some Students are Well-Prepared	Most Students are Well-Prepared
High School ELA Courses			
Special Education Students	62%	33%	5%
English Learners	42%	42%	15%
Not Targeted	20%	53%	28%
High School Mathematics Courses			
Special Education Students	62%	25%	3%
English Learners	53%	39%	8%
Not Targeted	31%	53%	16%
Middle School ELA Courses			
Special Education Students	56%	40%	3%
English Learners	45%	45%	10%
Not Targeted	18%	56%	26%
Middle School Mathematics Courses			
Special Education Students	59%	31%	10%
English Learners	44%	45%	11%
Not Targeted	18%	49%	33%

Teachers were also asked what proportion of the students in their course scored at or above the basic level when they took the California Standards Test the year before. The results shown in Table 6.5 are entirely consistent with the teachers’ own assessment of student skill levels as shown in Table 6.4 above. Again, the most severe problems were for courses targeting SE students. In more than 80 percent of these courses, fewer than a quarter of the students had demonstrated even basic achievement in the previous year.

Table 6.5 Percent of Students in the Class of 2004 Scoring at Least Basic on the California Standards Test in the Previous Year

Target Population For the Course	Percent of Teachers Indicating Percent of Their Students at Least Basic was:		
	Fewer than 25%	50-75%	More than 75%
High School ELA Courses			
Special Education Students	82%	12%	6%
English Learners	67%	29%	5%
Not Targeted	23%	46%	31%
High School Mathematics Courses			
Special Education Students	85%	8%	7%
English Learners	60%	31%	9%
Not Targeted	32%	50%	18%
Middle School ELA Courses			
Special Education Students	85%	13%	1%
English Learners	54%	38%	8%
Not Targeted	14%	50%	36%
Middle School Mathematics Courses			
Special Education Students	80%	10%	10%
English Learners	42%	44%	14%
Not Targeted	13%	41%	46%

## Interviews

### *Are incoming students better prepared?*

Most of the high school principals (27) reported that they either saw little change with the incoming students or they have not had enough time to tell if there has been a change. Ten principals reported that incoming students were better prepared than in the past. Additionally, 12 principals made comments regarding articulation between the high school and middle-grade feeder schools;—seven reported articulation was poor or needed improvement and six reported articulation was good and improving. Although it should not be considered conclusive, it was interesting to note that generally the same schools that reported student improvement also reported good articulation. The same was true for principals reporting the need to improve articulation; they also noted finding little change with incoming students.

The middle-grade feeder school principals reported findings contrary to the high schools. Eight of the 12 middle-grade feeder schools responding to this question stated that their incoming students appeared to be better prepared while four principals reported no changes. The same correlation found with the high schools holds true for the middle-grade feeder schools; that the same schools reporting improved incoming students reported good articulation with their feeder elementary schools.

During the site visits we asked high school ELA and mathematics teachers about any changes they have seen in the *preparation of students entering their classes* since the implementation of standards-based instruction. Thus, depending on the particular course, a teacher might be describing preparation that took place in middle-grade feeder schools or within the high school.

We placed responses into three main categories: better preparation now, little or no change now, worse preparation now. We also found several other categories, such as variance among middle-grade feeder schools, comments about student preparation in general, and relationship between preparation and student cohort. This question took the form of an open-ended response, with teachers discussing their initial response and often expanding on it. For example, a teacher might state that he or she has seen little change in the quality of student preparation and may also state that student preparation varies among middle-grade feeder schools. Results in Table 6.6 show that teachers of both subjects believe students are still not where they should be in terms of readiness for the course, but that they are starting to see improvements in student preparation, followed closely by those who see little or no change in student preparation levels. Only a few teachers stated that the level of student preparation is worse.

Table 6.6 Interview Responses About the Quality of Student Preparation by High School Subject

	Seeing better prep	Seeing little or no change	Seeing worse prep	Seeing poor prep generally	Feeder school variance	Cohort dependent	New teacher
HS ELA	19	11	3	18	3	2	5
HS math	16	14	8	18	2	1	6

We also asked middle-grade feeder school teachers who were interviewed about the *preparation of their incoming students*; 22 middle-grade feeder school math and 26 middle-grade feeder school ELA teachers responded. We used the same coding scheme as we did with high school teacher responses, and Table 6.7 presents the results. In both subjects, the most frequent response was that students were better prepared, followed by little/no change. We note that in two instances ELA teachers gave both a “better preparation” and “little/no change” comment in the same response.

Table 6.7 Interview Responses about the Quality of Student Preparation by Middle-Grade Feeder School Subject

	Seeing better prep	Seeing little or no change	Seeing worse prep	Seeing poor prep generally	Feeder school variance	Cohort dependent	New teacher
MS ELA	13	6	1	4	2	4	3
MS math	10	6	0	6	0	0	1

#### *Changes in performance of student subpopulations?*

Over half of the high school principals (18) said they have not seen improvement in student performance, but 13 of those stated that there has not been enough time yet to see greater results. Four principals discussed concerns that EL students are having difficulty



keeping up and one specifically mentioned that SE students are not passing—that they are the ones suffering the most. Only two principals stated that there has been a negative change in performance with one comment stating that the problem was likely due to a change in the schedule. There were, however, six high schools (22%) indicating that the CAHSEE and standards-based instruction have made a positive difference. They indicated that they were on the right path and should continue to see improvement in the future because of the standards.

The middle-grade feeder schools seemed to report a more positive outlook regarding student subpopulation performance than the high schools. About half of the middle-grade feeder schools felt there had been little change, but 40 percent of the principals felt there were positive changes in student performance. One school noted that all the subpopulations had seen improvement this year, but one school noted that EL students were having trouble.

### **Teacher Qualification and Experience**

The principal survey included a question on the extent of professional development targeting teaching the standards. Table 6.8 shows the levels of professional development activity reported in response to this question. The data presented in Table 6.8 also show that the current level of professional development is not related to cumulative CAHSEE passing rates for the Class of 2004. It is likely too soon to see any impact from the high level of professional development activity reported here. It may also be the case that there is more current professional development activity in schools with lower CAHSEE passing rates, as these schools are most in need of improvement.

Table 6.8 Percent of Teachers Receiving Professional Development in Teaching the Standards (Last 12 Months)

Percent of Teachers Receiving Professional Development.	Percent of Schools	Percent with High (> 75%) Passing Rates	
		ELA	Mathematics
> 90 %	44	78%	42%
75–90 %	18	89%	40%
25–74 %	21	87%	52%
< 25 %	15	76%	49%
Not Applicable	2	50%	50%

The teacher questionnaires included a number of questions about the qualifications and experiences of the teachers of each course. Table 6.9 provides information on the extent to which courses are being taught by teachers who possess appropriate credentials. Overall, nearly all of the teachers for most of the courses have appropriate credentials. The most significant concern is with high school mathematics courses targeting special education student where more than 20 percent of the courses reported in our survey do not have teachers with appropriate credentials.

### **Interviews**

In the interviews, most principals did not cite problems with teacher qualifications or credentials. The following are comments middle-grade feeder and high school principals made related to the qualifications of their teaching staffs.



- Of 14 teachers for Algebra 1, all but one has a math credential.
- Most teachers at our school are teaching within their certificates; two teachers are on emergency certificates.
- My district pays very well, but I'm hearing that getting good, qualified teachers is becoming a problem. The only time we hire someone without proper credentials is when we have a special need (e.g., physics teacher, special education teacher). From what I hear outside it's hard to get really well trained teachers.
- This school could easily have many more sections of Math Concepts, but we don't have credentialed staff to teach them. The principal believes teachers should be credentialed, but there is a situation now where there needs to be some reconsideration. There are science teachers who have lots of math knowledge and understanding but they can't teach math. However, then someone who has a sufficient number of units can teach even when they don't have the mathematical understanding.
- One of the challenges we face is that our district now has a freeze on hiring teachers with emergency credentials. Many teachers we interview really do not qualify to be teachers. Many graduates, who did not obtain teacher certificates while still in college, and who probably have good content knowledge, would like to teach, but they cannot be hired because of the freeze.

For each course listed as a primary or supplemental English-language arts or mathematics course, a teacher was asked "How many sections of this course or program are taught by a teacher with an appropriate subject area credential?" Table 6.9 summarizes the responses.

Table 6.9 Proportion of Teachers with Appropriate Credentials

Target Population For the Course	Percent of Courses Where Proportion of Teachers with Credentials is:				
	None	Some	About Half	Most	Nearly All
High School ELA Courses					
Special Education	12%	4%	2%	5%	78%
English Learners	4%	2%	4%	7%	84%
Not Targeted	3%	3%	3%	7%	84%
High School Mathematics Courses					
Special Education	22%	5%	5%	7%	61%
English Learners	11%	4%	6%	13%	66%
Not Targeted	8%	4%	6%	10%	72%
Middle-Grade Feeder School ELA Courses					
Special Education	7%	3%	6%	6%	78%
English Learners	3%	2%	3%	7%	85%
Not Targeted	2%	1%	3%	8%	87%
Middle-Grade Feeder School Mathematics Courses					
Special Education	14%	3%	5%	4%	73%
English Learners	8%	4%	6%	13%	70%
Not Targeted	4%	3%	5%	8%	81%

Table 6.10 Teacher Experience with Special Populations

Specific Type of Experience	Target Population For the Course	Percent of Courses where Teacher Experience is:				
		None	Slight	Moderate	Great	Very Great
High School ELA Teachers						
Economically Disadvantaged Students	Special Education	2%	3%	19%	31%	46%
	English Learners	1%	9%	22%	34%	34%
	Not Targeted	1%	10%	34%	31%	24%
Remedial Students	Special Education	1%	2%	15%	40%	43%
	English Learners	2%	9%	27%	37%	25%
	Not Targeted	1%	10%	38%	30%	20%
EL Students	English Learners	2%	5%	18%	32%	42%
Special Needs	Special Education	0%	4%	11%	23%	62%
High School Mathematics Teachers						
Economically Disadvantaged Students	Special Education	0%	4%	25%	35%	36%
	English Learners	0%	5%	33%	36%	26%
	Not Targeted	2%	12%	38%	27%	21%
Remedial Students	Special Education	0%	3%	19%	32%	46%
	English Learners	0%	5%	34%	36%	25%
	Not Targeted	1%	9%	37%	34%	19%
EL Students	English Learners	2%	13%	29%	34%	23%
Special Needs	Special Education	0%	2%	15%	28%	55%
Middle-Grade Feeder School ELA Teachers						
Economically Disadvantaged Students	Special Education	0%	12%	31%	22%	34%
	English Learners	0%	6%	20%	37%	39%
	Not Targeted	1%	6%	33%	37%	23%
Remedial Students	Special Education	2%	2%	6%	26%	65%
	English Learners	1%	9%	21%	36%	32%
	Not Targeted	0%	6%	32%	40%	22%
EL Students	English Learners	0%	7%	22%	29%	41%
Special Needs	Special Education	1%	0%	11%	5%	83%
Middle-Grade Feeder School Mathematics Teachers						
Economically Disadvantaged Students	Special Education	0%	3%	20%	36%	41%
	English Learners	0%	7%	27%	41%	24%
	Not Targeted	2%	7%	38%	29%	24%
Remedial Students	Special Education	2%	0%	6%	38%	54%
	English Learners	1%	7%	27%	36%	30%
	Not Targeted	1%	7%	38%	32%	22%
EL Students	English Learners	1%	8%	31%	25%	34%
Special Needs	Special Education	0%	0%	9%	16%	75%

Questions of effectiveness are most pronounced for courses targeting economically disadvantaged students, students in remedial programs, special education students, or English learners. Table 6.10 summarizes responses to questions about the experiences that teachers have with these special populations. The results indicate that courses targeting special education students and English learners are nearly all being taught by teachers with moderate to very great experience with these populations.

### Other Factors

Teachers were asked on the survey about the potential influence of a number of factors that might limit the effectiveness of the courses on which they were reporting. Table 6.11 summarizes their responses. Consistent with the findings discussed in the preceding section, lack of qualified teachers was not listed as a major concern.

The most significant limitation reported was lack of student motivation. Lack of parental support, low attendance, and other related problems were also cited as limiting factors for a number of courses. Note in Appendix B, “Summary of Questionnaire Response Frequencies,” that principals from most schools reported that fewer than a quarter of students who have not yet passed the CAHSEE take advantage of available summer school courses.

Table 6.11 Other Factors Limiting Course Effectiveness

Limitation	Percent of Teachers Indicating the Effect was:				
	None	Slight	Moderate	Great	Very Great
High School Teachers					
Low Attendance	14%	30%	23%	17%	16%
Low Motivation	5%	17%	26%	27%	25%
Limited English	21%	35%	25%	11%	8%
Low Parental Support	10%	29%	31%	19%	11%
Lack of Materials	53%	27%	12%	5%	3%
Lack of Teachers	70%	19%	6%	3%	2%
Middle-Grade Feeder School Teachers					
Low Attendance	24%	40%	16%	10%	10%
Low Motivation	10%	21%	29%	23%	17%
Limited English	23%	38%	24%	9%	6%
Low Parental Support	14%	27%	31%	18%	10%
Lack of Materials	59%	24%	10%	4%	3%
Lack of Teachers	74%	14%	6%	3%	3%

### Interviews

#### *Changes in motivation?*

Of the 36 high school principals interviewed, 13 stated they had seen little or no change in student motivation and five stated they had not yet had enough time to tell. Of principals giving both those responses, several made comments to indicate that they felt they were on the right path to see improvement in the future. Eight principals stated that students appear more motivated now and two of those felt students were more motivated for the CAHSEE than for other tests. One principal of a high EL population school felt motivation had

decreased, stating the EL students are now realizing they will never pass the CAHSEE and have quit trying. Three principals stated there has been no impact on dropout rates; however, three stated that the CAHSEE would increase dropout rates in the future. One reported that the dropout rate has already increased because of the CAHSEE.

Eight of the 17 middle-grade feeder school principals reported they have seen no change in student motivation and dropout rates. We note that, because most middle-grade feeder school students are still too young to drop out, it is unlikely that middle-grade feeder school principals would see much increase in dropout rates. Although the principals stated they talk to students about the importance of the CAHSEE, it is just too far in the future for them to be very concerned. Three stated that motivation has gone down, but supporting comments indicated it was because of teacher frustration trying to implement another new program (standards) or that the students, particularly minority students, do not care about performing well in school. No principals indicated that students' motivation has increased.

#### *Challenges faced by schools?*

Four challenges were addressed multiple times by the high school principals during the interviews. They included the need to increase parental support (10 principals), gain teacher support for making changes (8), meet the needs of SE and EL students (10), and solve logistical challenges for testing (9). These four challenges alone impact most everyone involved in education—students and their families, teachers, schools, districts and state administrators. Other challenges mentioned by principals included finding and keeping good teachers, creating the time needed for teachers to work on articulation and standards, and helping to build better community support.

The middle-grade feeder school principals echoed similar challenges to those mentioned by the high school principals with regard to parental support issues and getting teachers to embrace the standards. Over half of the principals mentioned both challenges. They also discussed the ways in which they are trying to address those challenges through training and education. They are trying to provide classes to teach parents life skills as well as to offer additional professional development opportunities to teachers. Middle-Grade Feeder school principals were also concerned with the challenges EL students present to the staff. Not only is it difficult for those students to get caught up after becoming familiar with the English language, but also one principal stated that they had many students who are not educated in their own language. Primarily, the principals discussed the need for more resources to provide special programs to help these students succeed. One principal summed up the difficulties by stating that for many EL students, school is the only place they have to speak, read, or even listen to English.

High school and “other” special program teachers indicated a number of challenges faced by their programs. Responses generally fell into student-level and school-level challenges, and are listed below:

#### *Student-level challenges*

- Getting students to understand their capabilities
- Parental support
- Truancy
- Motivation
- Low self-esteem

- Transportation
- Absenteeism
- Behavior problems
- Drug use

*School-level challenges*

- Articulation between elementary, middle/junior, and high schools
- Students phased out of EL programs too quickly
- Funding
- Lack of time to prepare students
- Staffing (not enough tutors)
- Large class sizes
- Inability to reach all students in need
- Lack of student preparation upon entering high school

### **Teachers' and Principals' Conclusions about the Class of 2004**

Although there was no specific question about holding the Class of 2004 accountable to the CAHSEE on the principal interview protocol, we found that 31 of the 50 high school principals and 11 of 15 middle-grade feeder school principals volunteered their opinions about this topic.

We categorized principal responses in a simple format:

- No, don't hold them accountable
- Yes, hold them accountable
- Modify the exam in some way, and
- Unclear

For high school principals, we found 13 “No” responses, four “Yes” responses, eight “Modify” responses, and six “Unclear” responses. For middle-grade feeder school principals, we found 4 “No” responses, 2 “Yes” responses, 3 “Modify” responses, and 2 “Unclear” responses. A sample of the principals’ responses appears under the following headings.

#### “No” responses

- I can live with the concept of a standardized test instrument through which students can demonstrate proficiency. We are not there for the Class of 2004—for many reasons. Within 2 to 3 years, we, at this site, will get there.
- There should be full alignment of the standards for 4 years before the exam should be implemented. That would be valid. Now, it is a confused melee of standards in California high schools—various degrees of alignment. All the things that define a curriculum need to be in place for 4 years so students go through the standards-based process as freshmen through seniors. It ought to be our freshmen or sophomores who should be accountable—that would be fairer.
- I would say no. The implementation of the standards did not start until those students were in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Most of the students are not ready. The class of 2006 should be ready. They were in middle school when we started to focus on the standards.

#### “Yes” responses

- They should make it count in order to maintain integrity of the test.

- The state absolutely should hold firm with the 2004 date; it would be disastrous if they move the date; people will say they'll never do what they say; it's fine to make exceptions where justifiable but be cautious with the exceptions.

"Modify" responses

- There is no need for CAHSEE; the state could select items from STAR (CAT6 and content standards) and Golden State and add a writing sample piece.
- The exit exam is a good idea, but the current one may not be the best. Schools should be able to say a student who graduated from a California school has certain basic skills, but we need some safety net for EL and SE students.

"Unclear" responses

- The exit exam is a good thing, but many students are not ready for it yet.
- The principal is very afraid of the large number of students who will not graduate if the CAHSEE requirement is enforced.

When ELA and math teachers were interviewed, the last question asked for their opinion on whether the Class of 2004 should be required to pass the CAHSEE to get a high school diploma. There were three main themes in their responses—whether standards had been covered for the Class of 2004, whether the Class of 2004 should be held accountable for passing the CAHSEE, and whether there should even be a high school exit exam. In all three categories, responses were coded as positive or negative.

Responses were tallied from 67 ELA teachers at 39 high schools, 73 math teachers at 39 high schools, 21 ELA teachers at 11 middle-grade feeder schools, and 24 math teachers at 11 middle-grade feeder schools. Responses are reported by school level and teacher subject area.

*High Schools*

**English-Language Arts.** Twenty-three ELA teachers discussed coverage of standards for the Class of 2004. Of these 23 teachers, 18 teachers said that standards were covered for the Class of 2004, and five teachers stated that standards had not been covered. At the school level, teachers at 14 schools responded that the standards had been covered, teachers at four schools stated they had not been covered, and teachers at one school were divided in their responses. As can be observed by the numbers, most schools were represented by only a single teacher's response concerning the coverage of standards. The following are some responses to give a flavor of what the teachers told us.

- The Class of 2004 was given the standards, but I do not know if they learned.
- I did not cover the standards as well with the Class of 2004 as I did this year. Next year, we will be doing even better on covering the standards.
- My firm answer is "maybe" for the Class of 2004. I am covering the standards but do not know about others. The next 2 years should be better and more consistent.
- Think the Class of 2004 has received the instruction needed to be ready to pass CAHSEE.

Forty ELA teachers provided responses concerning holding the Class of 2004 accountable for passing the CAHSEE to receive a diploma. Of those 40 teachers, 23 responded that the Class of 2004 should be held accountable and 17 responded that the



requirement should be delayed and the Class of 2004 should not be held accountable for passing the CAHSEE. At the school level, the responses were fairly equally split. Teachers at 11 schools responded that the Class of 2004 should be held accountable. Teachers at 11 schools responded that the Class of 2004 should not be held accountable and that the requirement should be delayed. Teachers at four schools were split on their responses.

- More time should be given until the requirement is implemented to allow for teachers to adjust to teaching to standards.
- If the Class of 2004 is not held accountable, it will damage the credibility of the exit exam in the eyes of the students. The exit exam has caused remarkable changes in the students' willingness to work. The classes seem to be getting better every year.
- I believe the state should stand on its requirement. If delayed, it would be a serious mistake—one that reinforces that this is not a serious requirement. Students need to know there is a requirement and that they have a responsibility for their education.
- There will not be a class that is seriously prepared for the CAHSEE for another 6 or 7 years.

Thirty-three ELA teachers provided responses about whether there should be a high school exit exam. Of the 33 teachers, 27 were in favor of having some form of high school exit exam and six were opposed to any kind of high school exit exam.

- I believe the exit exam is an awesome thing.
- I think CAHSEE is good because it gives meaning to graduation.
- We really need the accountability that the CAHSEE requirement will bring. Believe an exit exam is absolutely necessary because it equalizes across the board and keeps schools from passing students on. Believe in accountability. Have seen too many students who have graduated without basic skills.
- Opposed to CAHSEE in general.
- If the diploma is to mean something, the CAHSEE is a fairly decent minimal standard.
- Without the test there will not be a lot of change. Most teachers are like the students. Unless there are consequences and they are held accountable, they will not change.

**Mathematics.** Thirty math teachers expressed an opinion about the coverage of standards for the Class of 2004. Of the 30 teachers, 18 stated that the standards were covered for the Class of 2004 and 12 teachers stated that the standards were not covered. Aggregated by school, there were teachers at 13 schools who indicated that the standards were covered, teachers at eight schools who indicated that the standards were not covered, and teachers at two schools who offered mixed opinions.

- For the Class of 2004, similar standards were covered, but not all students understood them.
- They have been given the opportunity to learn here. They are given chances to do it. If juniors have not passed, they are in courses targeted to help them pass the test. Those who attend regularly and work hard will pass the exam. Still have some good students who are struggling.
- Class of 2004, students have not covered all of the content; they are always behind.



Thirty-eight math teachers at 27 high schools offered opinions about holding the Class of 2004 accountable for passing the CAHSEE. Of those 38 teachers, 26 responded that the Class of 2004 should have to pass the CAHSEE to receive a diploma, while 12 thought the requirement should be at least delayed. Aggregating at the school level, math teachers at 17 high schools felt the requirement should stay, teachers at seven high schools thought the requirement should be delayed, and teachers at three high schools provided mixed opinions.

- There will be a lot of students who will fail, but they have got to be accountable. Go and let it be a reality check. Not implementing may be detrimental.
- We should not delay. Students who are working hard to pass need to have that goal in front of them. Students who worked and already passed need to see that what they did has value and does not get blown off. Ditch the whole...program but do not delay it. I understand the legislature does not want to be bombarded with complaints, but do not delay. Lower the cut score if you have to, but maintain the requirement. Recognize that the Class of 2004 did not have standards-based instruction for their whole schooling and phase in the passing score until you reach the desired cut point in several years, but do not pull the rug out from the whole program. CAHSEE has been motivational to students to pass this requirement. Ratchet up the cut score for awhile rather than drop the requirement.
- Class of 2004 should be held accountable for CAHSEE because the junior class has spent the last two years focusing on this test and thought it was going to count. Students have been taking the test repeatedly, taking summer classes to pass, and finally passing. Teachers have spent extra time and resources to prepare them for the test. Delaying would send a message to other classes that the requirement will be removed at the last minute. Start with the first class that has been putting the time in, the Class of 2004.
- Withholding of diplomas should not take place until the students have had a chance to get standards-based instruction from the beginning.
- The Class of 2004 is not prepared. Need to wait 5 to 10 years.

Eighteen math teachers provided responses about whether or not there should be a high school exit exam. Of those 18 teachers, 16 were in favor of having some form of high school exit exam, while two were opposed to any kind of high school exit exam.

- We need a test, but not the test we have. The test should have two components—one that does not use calculators and one that does. For the section that measures higher-order math, the students should be allowed to use calculators.
- An exit exam is fine because students need to know something before they leave.
- Think students should be held accountable for their education and the exit exam is a good way to do that.
- Think the diploma should stand for something. Would like to see more than a single test score used though.
- I do not think anyone ever should have to pass the test to get a diploma.

#### *Middle-Grade Feeder Schools*

**English-Language Arts.** We received responses from this question from 21 ELA teachers at 11 middle-grade feeder schools. There were no teachers who had a response concerning the coverage of standards for the Class of 2004.

Nine ELA teachers at five middle-grade feeder schools provided a response concerning holding the Class of 2004 accountable for passing the CAHSEE to receive a diploma. Of those nine ELA teachers, four said that the Class of 2004 should have to pass the CAHSEE to receive a diploma. Five teachers thought the requirement of passing the CAHSEE to get a diploma should be at least delayed.

- Class of 2004 should be held responsible for CAHSEE. The students should be responsible. Teachers are taking CAHSEE seriously, but some students have no intention of graduating from high school.
- More time should be given until the requirement is implemented to allow for teachers to adjust to teaching to standards. Class of 2004 is not ready, would be better for 2006 or 2008.
- For the 65 kids I had, yes. But, I had the top kids from my track. For the others, I do not think they should. Because, until they left here, they were not held accountable. We had a no-fail policy here. If these students got 12 fails in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, they still moved on to 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The only thing they do not get to do is go through graduation. Our students do not believe us when we tell them. I personally think it should be the first class that they hold accountable in kindergarten.
- Think the 2004 requirement should be waived at this point. It should be delayed until standards-based instruction has been offered from beginning—so, maybe 10 to 12 years.

Seven ELA teachers responded about whether there should be a high school exit exam. Of those seven teachers, five were in favor of having some form of high school exit exam, and two were opposed to any kind of high school exit exam.

- It is grossly unfair to require the exit exam for lower SES. It is punishing to EL groups. Homework should be eliminated, and it would improve students' morale—they have so many things to do at home.
- I like the idea of an exit exam because I like students being held accountable for their learning. There is little motivation when students get to high school. They recognize that they must pass CAHSEE to get a diploma.

**Mathematics.** We received responses to this question from 24 math teachers at 11 middle-grade feeder schools. There were seven teachers who had a response concerning the coverage of standards for the Class of 2004. Of the seven teachers, four responded that the standards were covered for the Class of 2004. There were three teachers who responded that the standards were not covered.

- The Class of 2004 was being exposed to similar standards.
- The Class of 2004, in his class, they were using the standards at that time. In other classes, they were not.
- Teachers have not had time to cover the standards adequately.

Eight math teachers at four middle-grade feeder schools provided responses concerning holding the Class of 2004 accountable for the CAHSEE. Of those teachers, two stated that students in the Class of 2004 should have to pass the CAHSEE before receiving a diploma. Six, on the other hand, thought the requirement of passing the CAHSEE to get a diploma should be at least delayed.

- Students should be held accountable and have an exit exam. Some will fail. But, the state needs to stick to the requirement. If students are coming to learn, then let us show it.
- The Class of 2009 should be the first class accountable. Teachers have not had time to cover the standards adequately.
- Still need more time. You should wait until all of the issues are resolved. When asked how long that would be, the teacher replied, “A long time.”

There were 18 math teachers who provided responses about whether or not there should be a high school exit exam. Of those 18 teachers, 16 favored having some form of high school exit exam, and two were opposed to any kind of high school exit exam.

- An exit exam is a good thing. But students should not be penalized for not passing.
- I am 100 percent for teachers and students being held accountable.
- CAHSEE is an incentive to work harder. I like CAHSEE.
- CAHSEE is not a positive thing for the students. Getting the students to buy into the test is difficult, because many teachers do not even buy into it. It is a waste of time. CAHSEE will be a problem for 50 percent of the students to get a diploma.

The CAHSEE remediation teachers seemed fairly evenly split on the accountability issues. Of the eight teachers who expressed an opinion about the CAHSEE, three were in favor of holding the Class of 2004 accountable, three were opposed, and two expressed opinions somewhere in between. The following are representative of teachers’ comments:

- By junior year, the students here should be able to pass the exam. The standards were taught at this school for the Class of 2004.
- The date should remain firm, because if it changes, then the message is that we aren’t serious.
- Should the Class of 2004 be held accountable on the CAHSEE? I would say no; I do not think we are ready.
- The Class of 2004 is not yet prepared for the exam. The Class of 2004 probably needs more time because this requirement was not expected of them when they began school.
- On the one hand we should hold kids accountable so they won’t lose faith, but there will be more success on the CAHSEE the longer you put it off.

Sixteen of the 50 high school special education teachers stated explicitly that the Class of 2004 was not ready to be held accountable to the CAHSEE requirement. Most recommended that the exam be postponed for at least another year. Some of their responses and reasons are provided below:

- The Class of 2004 should not be held accountable; the Class of 2004 just isn’t ready.
- The Class of 2004 wasn’t prepared from the start of their education.
- The Class of 2004 had not been held to the standards in earlier years; they were socially promoted and now in mid-stream the rules were changed.
- The teachers or students have not had enough years to regroup their strategies and concentrate on what is expected.
- There should be a delay in the CAHSEE requirement for all students; put it off until 2008.

- The lead time wasn't sufficient to prepare the Class of 2004 for the standards on the exam.
- At least 2 more years would help in preparing the students; the state should delay maybe 2 more years because it has just been sprung on us.
- The Class of 2006 has had more time and should be the first class to be responsible for the CAHSEE requirement.
- The students that were in first grade when the standards were implemented are the ones who should be held accountable.

Among SE teachers who thought that the Class of 2004 was ready for accountability, common reasons were that the current juniors had been adequately prepared, or that postponement would result in a loss of credibility, as shown by the following comments:

- The standards were covered for the Class of 2004.
- Don't delay. When you back off, it looks bad. When students don't have to do it [meet the CAHSEE requirement], they won't take it seriously.

For the majority of high school EL teachers, the CAHSEE accountability was not so much a Class of 2004 issue as it was an EL-level issue. Twenty of 40 EL teachers noted that students who had been in the program since their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year would have a greater chance of passing the CAHSEE. These students would have had the time to advance to the higher EL levels—levels at which they would be more exposed to the California standards prior to taking the CAHSEE. Students who entered the school in higher grade levels, but at lower levels of English language proficiency, would not have as much time to prepare for the CAHSEE. Below are a few comments that address this issue:

- For EL 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, they likely can pass if they start here as freshman—about 80 percent could pass. Of EL students at levels 3 and 4 of the ELD program, perhaps 50 percent could pass if they took the exam seriously.
- The intermediate and advanced English Language Development (ELD) students will probably be okay. The beginning level students will not pass.
- If an EL student comes to this school as a 9<sup>th</sup> grader, some of these students who progress through EL Level 1 and EL Level 2 and get into EL Levels 3 and 4 may be able to pass.

Not all respondents were positive about any proportion of their students in the Class of 2004 passing the CAHSEE. The following comments illustrate how some respondents felt about EL student success on the CAHSEE and when to hold students accountable:

- None of the current EL juniors would pass the CAHSEE.
- I think the expectations are unrealistic [for EL students].
- The Class of 2004 is not ready and will probably not pass, but I think it should be implemented now anyway. The 2005 and 2006 classes will be able to pass the CAHSEE.
- I don't know what will happen to EL students if the Class of 2004 is responsible for the CAHSEE. Many will not succeed.

Fourteen special program teachers expressed their opinion regarding holding the Class of 2004 accountable to the CAHSEE. Five said that accountability should be delayed, while

nine thought that the 2004 date should be maintained. A few representative comments are provided below:

- The Class of 2008 would be more appropriate for accountability.
- The state needs to allow more time for a cycle of results of class-size reduction.
- The exit exam should perhaps go ahead and keep on schedule with some conditions.
- The state should definitely follow through with the 2004 date.
- The Class of 2004 should be held responsible for the CAHSEE as a graduation requirement.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Through January 2003, the CAHSEE passing rates continue to be low, particularly for mathematics. Students in the Class of 2004 will have at least one more chance to take the CAHSEE during their junior year and three more chances to take it during their senior year. Unless the rate of improvement increases dramatically, however, a substantial number of students will be denied a diploma at the end of their senior year. Passing rates for English learners and special education students continue to be particularly low. The CAHSEE diploma requirements will have a particularly large impact on these groups.

Passing rates vary considerably by school. Currently a significant number of schools have low or very low cumulative passing rates. This is particularly true in mathematics, for which half the high schools in the state have passing rates below 50 percent. Passing rates were closely related to reports of coverage of the content standards in our survey, adding considerable credibility to the information provided in response to the survey.

A number of reasons why current instruction was not fully effective were given in response to the survey and in the interviews. Student preparation, or lack thereof, was a clear concern for both initial (in middle-grade feeder school) and remedial (in high school) instruction in the content standards. Student motivation was a continuing concern as was student preparation in prerequisite skills. Concerns about student preparation for Algebra, particularly for special education students, were particularly high.

Teacher qualification and experience did not appear to be a significant problem at present, although with significant budget woes in many districts, concerns with hiring and retaining qualified teachers could increase. One area of possible concern is that some mathematics courses, particularly those targeting special education students, are being taught by teachers who do not have appropriate credentials. In general, however, those who teach courses targeting English learners and special education students have considerable experience with these populations.

Several other reasons for the limited effectiveness of instruction in some courses were examined. Low student motivation was commonly cited in both the surveys and the interviews, as was low attendance and lack of parental support. It is thus difficult to tell whether the limited effectiveness of standards-based instruction in some schools should be taken as an indicator of inadequate instruction when a significant part of the problem might be that students do not take full advantage of instructional opportunities offered to them. It is difficult to believe, however, that the CAHSEE requirement will not be a significant factor in increasing student motivation.